I was born with a doctor’s spirit. I guess you could say it was inherited from my parents—my father, a
surgeon, and my mother, a gynecologist. They met while attending Shanghai Southeast Medical College, fell in love, and were married shortly after graduation, before moving to Taiwan after World War II. Shortly after they were settled, I was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1949, and grew with a love for medicine and helping people ingrained in my very being.

I was educated in Taipei before graduating from medical school at the age of twenty-four. Packing my bags and ready for a new adventure, I went on to pursue a higher medical education in Chicago before settling in Hawaii. While there, I became an ophthalmologist, and decided to put my studies to good use—in medical missions.

This book is about my decades-long journey of becoming the “Angel of Sight” for the people of Zhongshan, a Chinese city nestled in the Pearl River Delta, northwest of Hong Kong. My journeys have uncovered my passion for helping others, a passion instilled in me from birth. With the help of my teams, co-workers, delegates, and so many others, healing and the possibility of sight after blindness has become a possibility for the people of Zhongshan City.

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My story begins in the brisk autumn of 1993. As the wind scattered crisp leaves through the air, a China Airlines flight took off from
Honolulu. Its destination—Hong Kong. On this long journey, there sat three Chinese-Americans, huddled near the front of the plane, all speaking softly in English beneath the dim lighting. The crew included Dr. Lockwood Young, a gynecologist; Dr. Young’s girlfriend, Shin; and me, an ophthalmologist. As the hours wore one, our conversations grew louder, filled with laughter and the hope of what was to come—we were embarking on our first medical mission to Zhongshan City, China.

The medical mission was originally initiated by Wadoc Young, Dr. Young’s uncle, who had ancestors from Zhongshan. Wadoc was a man of many talents; he was a well-known businessman and educator, the headmaster of the Zhongshan Chinese School in Honolulu, as well as the owner of the renowned, delicious King’s Garden Chinese Restaurant.

Since he was a friend of director Ou Xingtai of Zhongshan People’s Hospital, he was asked to look for and contact some warm-hearted Chinese-American doctors who could help support the medical development in Zhongshan City. After a thorough search, Wadoc found us. There wasn’t much need for discussion—this was a passion of ours, and we both gladly signed up. However, Dr. Young is a third-generation Chinese-American and is not fluent in Chinese. Thankfully, his girlfriend Shin, who was born in
China, was happy to serve as an interpreter for him during our mission.

After a ten-hour flight, the plane landed smoothly at Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport, and we were transferred to Kowloon to take an airfoil boat to Zhongshan City. The shoreline streaked past us until we arrived at Zhongshan Port, where a large group stood, ready to welcome us. Besides the hospital administrative and medical staff led by Director Ou, the leaders of Zhongshan City—including the deputy mayor, director of municipal health bureau, and members of the Overseas Chinese Office—were all there. That day in the fall of 1993, I set foot on the soil of Zhongshan City for the first time. My hope was that this mission for Zhongshan People’s Hospital could help open the door to better health for people in China. My long-term plan was to eventually collaborate with more doctors and philanthropists in Hawaii to bring medical training, funding, advanced
equipment, as well as the “aloha
spirit”—the Hawaiian spirit of
friendship, kindness, peace, and love
—to cities all over China.

At the time of our first visit, China’s
open-door policy and economic
reforms had just begun to reach
Zhongshan City. A few years prior,
the city was swiftly transformed
from a large agriculture region in the
Pearl River Delta to a modern,
metropolitan city. Every industry in
the region was in its start-up stage,
and Zhongshan’s ability to develop
advanced medical technology was in
its infancy. There was a shortage of
medical professionals, and the level
of medical care was severely
lacking.

The day after our arrival, Director
Ou enthusiastically took our group to
visit the hospital for the first time. It
was an overseas Chinese hospital
several decades earlier and was the
largest hospital in Zhongshan City at
the time. Dr. Cheng Bokun was the
chief ophthalmologist, helpfully
accompanying us through every step
of the visit. Upon touring the
building, we could immediately see
this hospital was not up to par with
current medical standards in the
United States. Once we reached the
eye clinic, we were shocked.
Silently, we took a moment to survey
the room before looking at each
other, at a loss for words. The only
equipment in the clinic was a worn
desk, a chair, and one
ophthalmoscope, an instrument for
inspecting the retina and other parts of the eye. There was also one old microscope in the operating room, which was given to them by a Chinese-Canadian a few years earlier.

Other than that, they had no other standard ophthalmologic equipment. After Dr. Young and I recovered from the shock, I began voicing my concerns about the missing and out-of-date equipment in the hospital. The conditions were far worse than other hospitals I had visited in previous missions, years earlier. Not deterred by the working conditions, we rolled up our sleeves and started to work.

We stayed in Zhongshan City for one week. During this time, we visited the hospital to conduct exchange conferences with doctors, while also providing free medical and surgical services to the hospital’s patients. I treated several patients and gave lectures to the ophthalmologists, while Dr. Young performed surgeries and taught new gynecological techniques.

The first lecture I delivered was in a small, cramped room at the back of the hospital. With the eager ophthalmologists packed around me, I introduced the advanced cataract surgery to them. Because there was no audio-visual education equipment or slide projector available, I resorted to drawing on the blackboard with chalk, wincing each
time the chalk squeaked at us. On the board, I demonstrated various details of the operations, including how to make an incision, how to complete a capsulotomy, and how to perform the groove in cataract surgery. This first lesson shook the ophthalmologists of Zhongshan People’s Hospital like a spring thunder. As I finished my presentation, the low rumble of their voices filled the room as they discussed the implications of my lecture with one another.

They had no idea that ophthalmology had advanced so far and were eager to learn more. They didn’t know how to use a microscope in surgery, still using the intracapsular extraction technique for cataract surgery, which was completed by the doctor without a microscope and without an intraocular lens implantation.

This outdated technique had caused the Zhongshan doctors’ surgery success rate to be very low, which was probably the reason why many patients avoided cataract surgery in the city. As a result, many citizens were suffering greatly with cataracts and other eye problems, especially the elderly. Thoughts of their plights spurred me on as I made eye contact with each doctor, in turn, during my lecture. They realized, through my teaching, that their people would finally receive surgeries that would help them recover their sight, greatly improving their quality of life.

Dr. Lin Yu, an enthusiastic, bright-
eyed man, was the youngest among the doctors listening to the lecture and was excited to put his new knowledge to use. The professional instruction he learned from his medical school was relatively up to date, but he was very grateful for my advanced lesson. As I finished the class, he quickly stood up and rushed toward me, trying to reach my desk first. Excitedly, he thanked me for my lesson, telling me, “It’s so valuable for me and the other doctors to learn this because it greatly extends our knowledge, skills, and ability to take care of our patients.” In that moment, I felt extremely honored to have a part in their growth.

The Zhongshan doctors now realized the importance of microsurgery in ophthalmology. There was a portable microscope available, which could be used on the operating table in the ophthalmology department of the hospital, but they had never used it. The doctors now started to engage in the study of microsurgery. My lecture had also laid the foundation for the study of using a phacoemulsification unit—giving them the ability to emulsify and remove the eye’s internal lens through ultrasound—and an operating microscope, which I later solicited from Hawaii Queens Hospital to donate to Zhongshan People’s Hospital.
To find ophthalmologic instruments and equipment for Zhongshan, I first reached out to Queens Hospital. I planned a visit to meet Mr. Arthur Ushijima, the hospital’s president, to inquire about a possible donation of a used phacoemulsification machine. Without hesitation, Mr. Ushijima asked an assistant to take me to the basement of the hospital where used equipment was stored. His assistant promptly led me through the twisting hallways until we reached the basement, a treasure trove of valuable equipment for the Zhongshan people. I selected a surgical microscope and an eye instrument—exactly what the Zhongshan People’s Hospital needed.

In addition to the hospital’s help, I asked Alcon, an American...
pharmaceutical company, to donate supplies, including intraocular lenses, scalpels, eye drops, and microsurgical sutures. Mr. Gonzales, who was the manager of Alcon Pharmaceutical in Honolulu, was happy to help and even agreed to join the mission to Zhongshan City. Within a few months, we had collected enough instruments and equipment to take back to Zhongshan for a vastly improved mission. In preparation, we put the equipment on a truck at Queens Hospital, ready to ship.

As we prepared for this next trip in 1995, a phacoemulsification machine, operating microscope, and slit-lamp microscope, as well as other examinational and surgical instruments were delivered in person to Hong Kong via a long-distance flight from Honolulu. Mr. Miao Ruijian, an employee for the hospital, was assigned to receive this equipment. He was very efficient, and he quickly finished the complicated customs procedures, carefully and properly transported these instruments across the border to the Zhongshan People’s Hospital, and started to install them for surgery. Excited to be back, I was able to resume my work by giving lessons, surgery demonstrations, and free medical and surgical services with the hospital’s new equipment and supplies.
Dr. Chen loading equipment on a truck at Queens Hospital, ready to ship to Zhongshan, 1995.

Welcoming at the port in Zhongshan by Dr. Ou and Alcon managers, 1995.

Possibly the first phacoemulsification unit in China, donated by Hawaii Queens Hospital, 1995.

In over twenty years, from the end of 1994 to today, I have visited the beautiful city of Zhongshan almost every year to provide free medical services and training for doctors. I
have brought donated intraocular lenses and other ophthalmologic surgery devices each time. Due to the complicated nature of the new technology, in the beginning, I had to travel to Zhongshan People’s Hospital from Honolulu almost every three months to train doctors on how to use the new equipment. Each time I arrived in town, news of my visit quickly spread. People would rush to the hospital, and the number of patients registered for the free eye surgery services grew rapidly.

During my visits, I either performed surgeries in person for demonstration or supervised other doctors in eye surgeries. Many patients who had been blind for years regained their sight due to the new advanced technology made available to them at Zhongshan People’s Hospital. To this day, I have experienced nothing more beautiful and fulfilling than seeing the joy spread over our patients’ faces as they opened their eyes, realizing they could see—they could finally see.

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Dr. Chen was interviewed by a reporter in Zhongshan City who asked why he has never tired of this mission.

These stories were reported by the
local media, including the local newspaper Zhongshan Daily, as well as the area’s television and radio stations. The reports stated that the Zhongshan people had welcomed a doctor from America who had brought them the miraculous gift of sight. Hence, I was dubbed the “Angel of Sight” by the people, and they began to view me as a hero. One reporter who interviewed me asked why I have never tired of my mission. I explained my passion for healing, finishing with, “The only way to accomplish this mission is to be persistent.”

Due to the new technology, patients who received cataract surgery in Zhongshan weren’t required to stay overnight in the hospital as they did before. It took about half an hour or less for the cataract surgery. It was painless and stitchless, performed under eye drop anesthesia, and all patients were able to return home immediately after surgery. The doctors who delivered these excellent outcomes were thrilled. The availability of advanced instruments and, consequently, the
successful cataract surgery outcomes greatly encouraged the directors and medical staff in the hospital to continue striving for more improvement.

Dr. Wang and Dr. Chang at Queens Hospital.

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Recognizing the steadily gaining momentum, we began to arrange the next step—we planned to enable doctors from Zhongshan to be trained in Hawaii. This was made possible due to generous support from Queens Hospital of Hawaii. Director and cardiologist, Dr. Wang Dekun, and Dr. Yu Yuanlong, a surgeon, were invited to visit Queens hospital in Honolulu, as the first group. Queens Hospital arranged an observership for Dr. Yuanlong in general surgery for a short period of time and one for Dr. Wang in cardiovascular surgery for one month. While he was there, Dr. Wang was given a free public transportation pass to travel around Honolulu and enjoy the island. Queens Hospital also provided an upscale condominium near the hospital for his stay, plus complimentary meals at the Queens Hospital cafeteria. The hospital was
extremely accommodating, and both doctors gained irreplaceable knowledge during their time in Honolulu.

Eventually, Zhongshan People’s Hospital and Queens Hospital signed an agreement for future medical exchange. Since signing this agreement, ten doctors from Zhongshan have received training at the Queens Hospital in different specialties, including ophthalmology, gynecology, cardiology, and pulmonary medicine. The doctors’ visits to Hawaii were also supported by the overseas Zhongshan community in Honolulu. During the doctors’ time in Hawaii, the friendly American doctors entertained them with their aloha spirit when they were off duty. They took them to visit the plant-filled beaches with crystal blue water and treated them to meals at delicious local restaurants. The Chinese doctors greatly appreciated the warm reception, and in return, they provided free glaucoma screenings for overseas Chinese at the United Chinese Society in Chinatown.
To train more doctors, I created the Ophthalmology International Class held at Zhongshan People’s Hospital. Lectures and demonstrations of cataract surgeries were provided for students participating in the class. Through this program, four chief ophthalmologists were trained for work in Zhongshan City, including Dr. Zhong Jingxian of Jiangmen City and three other ophthalmologists.

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In 1998, our work between the two countries had formed a bond stronger than simply donated medical supplies. Zhongshan’s mayor, Huang Ziqiang, and Honolulu’s mayor, Jeremy Harris, decided to sign an agreement to become sister cities. As a result, in 1999, Zhongshan People’s Hospital and Honolulu’s Queens Hospital officially became sister hospitals. In 2005, as the president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, I accompanied a Hawaii State Government delegation, led by Governor Linda Lingle...
and the winner of the Narcissus Queen Pageant, to visit Zhongshan and celebrate the birth of a friendly cooperation agreement between Hawaii, Zhongshan City, and its province, Guangdong. Since this agreement, the interactions between the two cities have enhanced developments in economy, tourism, and medical exchanges for both cities.

Dr. Chen with Hawaii Governor Lingle and Narcissus Queen, Miss Dung.

Dr. Hedges, the Dean of the Medical School at the University of Hawaii, and Dr. Tseu, the President of the Jackie Chan Foundation, visited Zhongshan City in 2009, accompanied by me. Dr. Tseu had previously been elected Chinese Citizen of the Year for his extensive philanthropic work in Hawaii. During our trip, we also visited the San Giow Hospital, located in a suburb of Zhongshan City. We explored the hospital and spoke with the staff; and, after observing their need for a glaucoma examination instrument worth ten thousand US dollars, Dr. Tseu generously donated the sum to the hospital immediately. I was speechless, grateful beyond words.
Since Zhongshan People’s Hospital and Queens Hospital of Honolulu have become sister hospitals, an American training source has been established for the doctors from Zhongshan. This training source was
one of the main reasons the hospital was able to quickly advance. The aloha spirit of the Queens Hospital administrator deserves to be applauded for his work with the training. The advancement in Zhongshan People’s Hospital should also be attributed to the hard work of previous directors and the current hospital director, Yuan Yong.

Consequently, Zhongshan People’s Hospital wanted to offer me a position as a consultant and visiting professor. However, they knew it would be impossible to put a monetary value on the costs incurred in the years of travel between Zhongshan and Hawaii, not to mention all the donations, training, and surgical services. Persistent, Director Wang consulted with relevant leaders in the city and decided to consider giving me one thousand RMB Yuan as an honorarium. Surprised and grateful for their kindness, I graciously declined the monetary salary and told them a certificate of appointment would be more than sufficient. I was officially employed as a consultant and clinical professor for the hospital in 2000. In celebration, the hospital held a grand ceremony, welcoming me to their staff.

Since the development of ophthalmology in Zhongshan City had advanced significantly, it was time to expand the program to influence other areas. In 2007, I founded an ophthalmology training
center in Zhongshan that not only trained the doctors in the city, but also received students from the rest of the Guangdong Province and Mongolia. Several eye doctors from Outer Mongolia, Hainan Island, Dongguan, and Shenzhen all received training there. My hope was that in the future, ophthalmologists from various provinces in China and all over Asia would have the opportunity to receive training in our advanced ophthalmology center in Zhongshan City.

In 2007, I accompanied the Mayor of Honolulu, Mufi Hannemann, and his wife on a visit to Zhongshan. It was the 10th anniversary of the sister city partnership between Honolulu and Zhongshan City, as well as the 9th anniversary of the sister hospital partnership between Zhongshan People’s Hospital and Hawaii Queens Hospital. Needless to say, it was a time of celebration for both cities as we reflected on the relationships formed and the progress we’d made.

To commemorate the remarkable
friendship between the two cities and hospitals, I donated two pieces of ophthalmologic equipment to Zhongshan: a glare test instrument and a lensometer. Today, the hospital’s ophthalmology department has become a ranking center in the Guangdong Province and is now recognized worldwide as an advanced program. This is attributed largely in part to the current hospital director, Yuan Yong, and the eye department director, Dr. Zhao.

I subsequently visited the other branches of Zhongshan People’s Hospital in the small neighboring villages to provide free eye screening examinations. With the continuing development of new technologies, I introduced an updated multifocal intraocular lens to Zhongshan in 2009 and used the lens in cataract surgery for Director Ou’s wife. The surgery was successful and consequently inspired the doctors in Zhongshan People’s Hospital once again. Due to this new lens, Mrs. Ou no longer needed to wear glasses. Astonished at the

*Dr. Chen with former Honolulu Mayor, Mufi Hannemann, and Director Wang.*
results, a demonstration of how to implant the new lens was given to their doctors.

During these years of service to Zhongshan, I experienced some interesting cases and stories worth mentioning. The first case was a young woman who had been blind in her right eye for several years, but she had no idea why or how it had happened. Upon examination, I found a mature cataract and assured her it could be cured by surgery. “Trust me,” I said, “after this surgery, your vision will be restored.”

Phacoemulsification small incision cataract surgery was performed on her the next day. During the procedure, I noticed something strange. Looking closer, I realized a tiny piece of metal was stuck inside the cataract. We discovered that when she was running a machine, years earlier as a factory worker, a tiny piece of metal had struck her
right eye at high speed, penetrating her cornea and sticking in her crystallens. The white cataract was removed together with the tiny piece of metal, and an intraocular lens was placed in the eye to replace the ruined crystallens. The patient’s vision recovered dramatically.

Another case was an elderly patient suffering from diabetes complications who developed maculopathy in his retina. He consulted several doctors, but they all declined to perform cataract surgery because of the high probability of a disastrous outcome due to his complications. However, we were willing to do whatever possible to help him. Surgery was performed using a specialized technique and medication to minimize the risk, and we were able to restore the patient’s vision successfully. The patient was so ecstatic that he went on the local news to give a live interview testimonial praising the “Angel of Sight.”

Another touching story that deserves to be shared includes Mr. Tai Yaw Cheung of Honolulu and his granddaughter, Ellen. Ellen was suffering from a deadly case of leukemia at only two years old. At the time, the disease could be treated by a blood-matched bone-marrow transplant. Various health organizations in Hawaii conducted blood tests for potential donors to match her bone marrow for the
In the meantime, Ellen was dying. Time was of the essence, and touched by her story, I was desperate to help. I thought of my relationships in Zhongshan, where Mr. Cheung’s ancestors were from, and hoped there may be a distant relative in Zhongshan carrying a bone marrow match that could save her life. I wrote a personal letter to the director of the Zhongshan Red Cross and Zhongshan People’s Hospital, with a follow-up telephone call to plead for help in finding a matching donor. Director Ou of Zhongshan People’s Hospital sprang into action, calling urgently through the media for help. In just a few days, hundreds of volunteers showed up at the hospital for blood tests. The hospital absorbed all the costs, and the story gained national coverage in China. A donor was found, but unfortunately, we were not able to save Ellen’s life. However, her parents were extremely touched by the efforts of both Hawaii and Zhongshan as the citizens strove to find a way to help Ellen.

Another story occurred when a delegation from the United Chinese Society of Hawaii visited Zhongshan in 1995 and were hosted by the Zhongshan Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs. Interested in the culture, the group expressed they would like to taste local, authentic food instead of the scheduled food procedures, but despite the thousands of blood samples collected for the test in Hawaii, they still couldn’t find a suitable donor.
arranged for the tourists. Eager to comply, their hosts warmly received and entertained them with a very special dinner by the hospital, which consisted of a soup named “Dragon Fighting Against a Tiger.” It was a pot of dark green, thick soup, with a tangy smell and delicious taste. The tourists had never heard of such a delicacy. The recipe includes a snake, a cat, and a chicken, as well as some traditional Chinese herbs, with the snake and cat symbolizing the dragon and tiger. Chicken and Chinese herbs were used for nutrition and taste. The memorable delicacy, experience, and hospitality deeply touched every member of the group.

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Although I have primarily spoken about my experiences in Zhongshan, my medical mission journeys have taken me other places as well. When I completed my residency training program in Chicago and started a private practice in Honolulu in 1980, I volunteered to join the St. Frances Hospital health screen program. The program was set to perform glaucoma screenings around the island in Honolulu. I visited different community centers filled with senior citizens who had come for me to screen their eyes.

Later on, I also participated in several health fairs run by different ethnic groups and churches, such as the Philippine and Samoa communities, for years to do free eye examinations for the poor and
elderly. When visiting Chinese doctors had their training with me, I had them to join me in performing glaucoma screenings in China Town and the Chinese Culture Center. We also provided bilingual educational lectures to new immigrants about eye care. Out of sympathy for the poverty-stricken people we encountered, I performed many surgeries free of charge.

In 1985, I went on a mission to the Philippines to the hometown of the late president, Marcos. It was initiated by Hawaii State Representative Romy Cachola and his wife, Dr. Cachola. The team consisted of Dr. Pacpaco, Dr. Pasa, Dr. Davis, and me, and we excitedly began our long, strenuous journey to the Philippines. Once we arrived in Manila from Honolulu, we were squeezed into a small, decrepit military plane to fly to the northern city of Vigan. After arriving in Vigan, we were given a treat—we were invited to stay in the governor’s mansion. It was a large mansion, but we were surprised when we found it lacked basic modern conveniences, like air conditioning and hot showers. There were hundreds of patients in need of cataract surgery in Vigan. Unfortunately, we didn’t have enough supplies, so we could only perform surgery on one eye per patient. Surgery was performed all day, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., for a week, often without any meal breaks.

While there, we had unique
experiences, including transportation by horse and wagon back and forth between the hospital and governor’s mansion. The patients in Vigan were extremely grateful to us, and to show their thanks, they presented us with live chickens as a token of their gratitude. Of course, the gifts were politely declined because it wasn’t possible to bring the live animals back to Hawaii, but their sentiment was appreciated all the same. On our way home, we opted for a long bus ride back to Manila instead of the rickety plane from our initial journey. When I arrived back home in Honolulu, my wife thought I had gone to a weight loss camp since I’d lost ten pounds from the mission.

In 1988, I went on a mission to Taiwan. I was invited to Tai Dong Logefeil Memorial Hospital, a Christian hospital run by American doctors. I remember how humorous I looked, attracting many stares from my fellow travelers as I carried a portable phacoemulsification machine in economy class on the flight from Honolulu to Taipei. The phacoemulsification machine was state of the art equipment at the time.
and probably the first one ever taken to Taiwan.

Dr. Der Show Lee from Tri-Service Military General Hospital was invited to come along by van to TaiDong, a ten-hour ride from Taipei. They drove all the way from Taipei to the southeast tip of the island to arrive in the small, remote city. We stayed in a boarding room of the hospital. Every morning, we joined the staff in prayer in the hospital chapel before seeing patients and performing surgeries. These prayers gave me a strong sense of peace, and I felt calm and confident to start the day’s work. I gave lectures to the non-ophthalmologist colleagues of the hospital about eye care and also taught Dr. Lee and a local eye doctor how to perform small incision cataract surgeries with phacoemulsification. Today, Dr. Lee is a famous cataract surgeon in Taiwan. After the mission, we took a train, traveling north along the beautiful east coast shoreline of Taiwan back to Taipei.

In 1993, I joined the Aloha Medical Mission of Hawaii to Vietnam. The American surgeons all performed operations in one room, surrounded by the Vietnamese eye doctors, observing and learning. Unbeknownst to the surgeons at the time, there was also a huge group of Vietnamese eye surgeons in a large room upstairs, watching the procedures on a TV monitor in real time. Our impact was so great, I
vividly remember the Vietnamese doctors crying upon our departure, asking if and when the American surgeons would be back again.

Dr. Chen at Cho Ray Hospital in Vietnam, 24 years apart.

1993 (top) and 2017 (bottom).

Vietnam mission in 1993. The team consisted of Dr. Chen, Dr. Gerald Faulkner, Dr. Edwards, and Mr. Al Mosing.

In 2016, I was invited to the Zhengzhou City of Henan and
attended the medical conference held by the Henan Ophthalmology Association. The room was filled to the brim, holding over a thousand ophthalmologists participating in the conference. I introduced the use of one of the latest advances in ophthalmologic equipment—an ophthalmologic surgery navigator. This navigator has the ability to make surgery more accurate in correcting refraction errors during cataract surgery due to astigmatism, farsightedness, and nearsightedness.

Also in 2016, the Honolulu Westside Rotary Club asked me to present a speech about my medical missions to Taiwan and Vietnam, as well as an introduction about the medical development, achievements, and existing problems of Zhongshan City in eliminating blindness caused by cataracts. Zhongshan’s focus over the past several decades had been eliminating illiteracy, but now, the focus has become eliminating blindness due to cataracts, improving the quality of life in the rural area. After my speech, Mr. Qiu Shihong, the Chairman of Zhongshan Municipal People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, asked me to help with the development of the Banfu Town Hospital. I agreed and have visited the hospital twice over the past two years to provide free eye examinations and consultations.
Banfu is located south of Zhongshan City, only half an hour drive away from the city center of Shaquille. It’s a rural area, filled with farm villages and breath-taking mountains and rivers. The total population is about fifty thousand. The medical care needs to vastly improve in order to serve the huge population. Currently, there is no ophthalmologist that can perform modern cataract surgery. Graciously, the Hawaii Westside Rotary Club donated ten thousand US dollars to Banfu Hospital to support my eye mission. I subsequently invited Dr. He from Beijing, Dr. Zhao from Zhongshan, and Drs. Sun and Lin from Taiwan to hold a symposium to teach the doctors in Banfu in April 2017. The Westside Rotary Club delegate came as well.

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I have planned to host a reunion dinner in Zhongshan every year with former directors of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the Director of Public Health Bureau, the Director of People’s Hospital, and the staff in order to thank them for the twenty years of assistance to our mission in Zhongshan. Our progress would have been impossible without their support. Even though most of them are now retired, I still consider them family as well as and critical partners in this long Zhongshan mission.
It is my hope that more medical professionals will join in our mission to promote eye doctor education. I have founded a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—the Ming Chen Foundation—to give scholarships to young eye doctors in training, enabling them to travel to Hawaii to shadow and collaborate with me on ophthalmology research. The men and women who have joined us in our endeavors have helped us give the gift of sight to countless patients in a city that desperately needed our help. I am looking forward to the impact we will have on Zhongshan, the Guangdong Province, and soon, even more areas of the world.

The following includes testimonials from previous scholarship recipients:

Dr. Nathan Wilbanks said, “The Ming Chen Foundation scholarship is an incredible opportunity. It was encouraging to be able to see what life can be like after residency while having the beautiful scenery of Hawaii in the background. I am so
grateful that Dr. Chen started this program and for his commitment to supporting the next generation of ophthalmologists.”

Dr. Michael Reinsbach said, “I have learned a great deal about several topics of professional development — from practice style, time management, EMR (electronic medical records) utilization, billing, clinic flow, office design, work/life balance, financial strategy, to many clinically applicable concepts and surgical techniques.”

Dr. Laura Kueny said, “Dr. Chen is
an excellent teacher and clearly enjoys helping those around him learn. One reason he may be such a strong teacher is that he spends hours every week himself studying the industry and learning about new techniques and technologies.”

Laura Kueny, MD. PGY-2 ophthalmology resident, Georgetown University/Washington Hospital Center, at Dr. Chen’s surgical suite, Hawaii.

Dr. Justin Karlin said, “I feel very lucky to have been given the opportunity to spend time on Oahu with Dr. Chen. He kindly allowed me to spend time with him in his clinic and operating room, he involved me in several research projects, and he allowed me to present a clinical case and associated research at the 32nd annual Hawaiian Ophthalmological Society (H.O.S.) meeting.”
Justin Karlin, MD, MSc. PGY-3 ophthalmology resident, University of Virginia, at the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society annual meeting.

For more information on the scholarship program or medical mission donations, please visit mingchenfoundation.org or call (808)-531-8874. To make a tax-deductible donation, please visit our website or send a check to The Ming Chen Foundation at 55 S. Kukui St. Suite C109, Honolulu, HI 96813.
About Ming Chen MD, MSc, FACS:

Dr. Chen has practiced ophthalmology in Honolulu since 1980, and his office is located in the city’s downtown. He was once the chief ophthalmologist at Kuakini Hospital in Honolulu. Currently, he is the clinical professor of ophthalmology at John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii.

Dr. Chen is also actively involved in social activities. He was the chairman of the Organization of Chinese-Americans Hawaii chapter, president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, president of the United Chinese Society of Hawaii, and president of the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society. He also was once the only member of the State Council’s Overseas Exchange Association of China in Hawaii and represented the Hawaiian Chinese community by participating in many important commemorative activities.
and ceremonies in China.

Dr. Chen is an American Board of Ophthalmology certified ophthalmologist and a fellow of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. He continued his advanced study of medical science and received a master’s degree in Evidence Based Medicine at Teesside University in the United Kingdom in 2010. He has received letters of appreciation from many organizations, including National Taiwan University, China Medical University, Chung Shan Medical University, the Taiwan After-care Association, the Yan XiaoZhang Baseball Development Foundation, the Tri-Service General Hospital, and the Logefeil Memorial Hospital in Taiwan for his contributions in teaching and medical services.

He was awarded the Yat-sen prize by Zhongshan City in 2011. In 2012, he was honored as the Model Citizen of the United Chinese Society of Hawaii. He was also honored at the Grand Ceremony of Chinese People in South China and received the
Dr. Chen receiving honorary citizenship of Zhongshan, 2013.

Dr. Chen has two grown daughters—Crystal is a fashion designer who designed this book cover and helped edit the content, and Mindy is a family practice physician in training. He currently resides in Honolulu with his wife, Christina.

Dr. Chen with wife, Christina, and daughters, Crystal and Mindy, 2015.